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SUBJECT: GUATEMALA: IMPLEMENTING THE PRESIDENT'S FREEDOM AGENDA

REF: A. STATE 44903
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¶1. As reported in our Advancing Freedom and Democracy Report (AFDR) and Democracy Strategy Paper, the Embassy reached out to support democracy and human rights activists through activities to implement the President's Freedom Agenda.

¶2. The Chief of Mission engaged with the President and senior levels of the Guatemalan government on progress toward democratic governance and respect for human rights. He, along with other Embassy officers, conducted numerous meetings with civil society, interviews with press, and discussions with students, women's groups, indigenous organizations, labor organizations, and local, as well as USG-based, human rights organizations. Embassy met regularly with human rights leaders and defenders, including labor activists, to strengthen democratic practices and to promote respect for human rights.

¶3. Embassy identified and nominated local leaders, especially historically marginalized women and indigenous leaders, for international visitor exchange programs and other professional exchanges and training opportunities, and engaged in public outreach, especially in rural, indigenous areas, to advance democracy and human rights in support of the President's Freedom Agenda. Embassy also identified and procured USG funding to support various local human rights groups.

¶4. The USG, along with other donors, is providing financial and political support to the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), a UN-led body charged with assisting Guatemalan institutions investigate and prosecute organized crime groups that threaten the rule of law. To ensure CICIG's sustainability in combating impunity, the USG is directly supporting CICIG operations, as well as strengthening the capacity of Guatemalan law enforcement and judicial institutions that serve as key partners in investigating and prosecuting organized crimes and human rights abuses, and will assume CICIG's mandate in 2010.

¶5. There are no dissidents from un-free nations who are known to be living in exile, or seeking asylum, in Guatemala. An Embassy officer maintains contact with a few of the anti-Castro Cubans in Guatemala, but they are neither organized nor politically active.

Lindwall